

### Mythological Significance of Crow Poems: Deconstructive Analysis of Poe's "The Raven" and Hughes's "Crow"

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#### Abstract:

Crows and ravens are highly intelligent birds found in all parts of the world, ranging from remote forests and snow-capped mountains to busy city streets. Taxonomically, there is little that differentiates crows and ravens. Both are large passerine birds that belong to the *Corvus* genus. However, ravens are generally larger and heavier than crows, with heavier bills and characteristic throat hackles. Crows are more often found around human habitations and more gregarious than ravens. From medieval to modern times, few birds have inspired poets and writers as much as crows and ravens. Researchers have identified more than sixty crow poems written during the last century, ranging from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845) to Ted Hughes's "Crow" series of poems (1970). Mythological allusions to crows and ravens can be found even in the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare. This study explores the mythological significance of "Crow" poems of Ted Hughes and "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe by employing deconstructive analysis. From a mythological standpoint, Ted Hughes's "Crow" poems capture the unspoken pain of human existence amidst violence, destruction, and death, whereas Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" uses the bird as an iconic symbol of the mysterious human psyche engulfed in grief and sorrow. This study aims to deconstruct the mythological significance of Ted Hughes's "Crow" poems and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," revealing their portrayal of human pain and grief. The novelty lies in juxtaposing these two distinct yet thematically linked works to deepen the understanding of their symbolic use of crows and ravens.

**Keywords:** crow, raven, mythology, deconstruction, Ted Hughes, Edgar Allan Poe.

### 乌鸦诗的神话意义——对爱伦·坡的《乌鸦》和休斯的《乌鸦》的解构分析

## 摘要:

乌鸦和渡鸦是高度聪明的鸟类，它们遍布世界各地，从偏远的森林和白雪皑皑的山脉到繁忙的城市街道，都有它们的身影。从分类学上讲，乌鸦和渡鸦几乎没有什么区别。它们都是大型雀形目鸟类，属于鸦属。然而，渡鸦通常比乌鸦更大更重，喙更重，喉部有特有的颈羽。乌鸦更常见于人类居住地周围，而且比渡鸦更合群。从中世纪到现代，很少有鸟类能像乌鸦和渡鸦一样给诗人和作家带来如此多的灵感。研究人员已经发现了上个世纪创作的 60 多首关于乌鸦的诗歌，从埃德加·爱伦·坡的《乌鸦》（1845 年）到特德·休斯的《乌鸦》系列诗（1970 年）。甚至在乔叟和莎士比亚的作品中也可以找到对乌鸦和渡鸦的神话典故。本研究采用解构分析法，探讨特德·休斯的《乌鸦》诗和埃德加·爱伦·坡的《乌鸦》诗的神话意义。从神话的角度来看，特德·休斯的《乌鸦》诗捕捉了人类在暴力、破坏和死亡中生存的无声痛苦，而埃德加·爱伦·坡的《乌鸦》则将鸟作为沉浸在悲伤和悲痛中的神秘人类心灵的标志性象征。本研究旨在解构特德·休斯的《乌鸦》诗和埃德加·爱伦·坡的《乌鸦》诗的神话意义，揭示它们对人类痛苦和悲痛的描绘。新颖之处在于将这两部截然不同但主题相关的作品并列，以加深对它们对乌鸦和渡鸦的象征意义的理解。

**关键词:** 乌鸦、渡鸦、神话、解构、特德休斯、埃德加·爱伦·坡。

## 1. Introduction

Crows and ravens are universal birds that can be found all over the world, from secluded forests and snow-capped peaks to crowded city streets. They are remarkably intelligent birds of prey, and it is not easy to distinguish between them. Taxonomically, both are members of the *Corvus* genus of passerine birds. Ravens have broader bills and distinctive throat hackles, making them larger and heavier than crows. Crows are more gregarious than ravens and are more frequently seen near human habitations. Biological research has established that ravens and crows have larger brains and stronger cognitive functions than other birds. According to Cnotka et al. (2008), crows are among the few non-hominid animals on Earth that are thought to be intelligent species because they have developed clever survival techniques and even the ability to use tools. Nearly forty *Corvus* species are found around the world, including isolated archipelagos and mountain peaks (Jønsson et al., 2012). The male and female build the nest and raise the young as these birds are monogamous. Crows and ravens are adaptable omnivores that eat almost anything and are typically considered scavengers. These birds are capable of some amazing twists, turns, and rolls in mid-air, but crows generally fly with a slow and constant wing speed. From medieval to modern times, few birds have inspired poets and writers as much as crows and ravens.

There are numerous mythological beliefs connected with crows and ravens in every culture around the world. According to Wigington (2020), some people see these black-feathered birds as a sign of bad luck, but others see them as divine messengers, and they are frequently depicted in folklore and legend as trickster characters. Researchers have identified more than sixty crow poems written during the last century, ranging from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845) to Ted Hughes's "Crow" series of poems published in 1970. Moreover, the list of poets who wrote about this bird includes the names of well-known poets such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, William Blake, Robert Frost,

William Cullen Bryant, Elizabeth Bishop, William Cooper, and William Wordsworth.

Among crow poems, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and Ted Hughes's "Crow" series of poems published in 1970 deserve special attention because they are excellent explorations of the mythological significance of these birds that belong to the *Corvus* genus. Both of these poets explored the enigmatic and darkest aspects of the human psyche through their poems and depicted the mystery of unspoken grief and sorrow in human life, which is symbolized by crows and ravens. In other words, in the course of time, these birds have evolved into animal archetypes permanently embedded in human consciousness. Mcleod (2023) explained this process as a collection of physical or metaphorical traits that embodies the essence or a typical example of an animal, and it is the "mental image" of that animal. This includes not only the biological traits necessary to identify an animal as belonging to a particular species or genus, but also the anthropomorphisms and biased pseudo-scientific features created and reinforced by culture.

The ubiquitous presence of these birds across all climates and cultures has led to their inclusion in numerous myths and folk tales. Although crows and ravens belong to the same genus, *Corvus*, they are not identical species. In general, ravens are larger and somewhat scruffier than crows. Additionally, while both birds have an amazing range of cries and noises, ravens' calls are often deeper and more guttural than crows'. However, in folklore and mythology, they are often considered similar without compartmental distinctions. Some studies have revealed that most young people of the modern digital generation are unaware of the mythological significance associated with these birds. However, they have acquired a negative image of the bird through the influence of popular culture, films, television serials, and online video games (Król & Hernik, 2020). Therefore, it is relevant to expose the mythological significance of these birds and how they have been represented in the

unconscious psyche of human beings.

## 2. Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the premise that crows and ravens play a significant role in human life because they live in close proximity with human beings, and there are several mythologies about crows and ravens in every culture around the world. Because crows and ravens are similar and belong to the same genus, their roles in mythology and symbolism often overlap considerably. However, until now, there has not been any comprehensive or focused research on the mythological significance of crows and ravens in relation to human life and how these birds are represented in literature. The unbreakable bond between humans and crows has been developed throughout the world through various mythologies in different cultures since time immemorial. Several poets have written about crows and ravens and depicted them as symbols of the unspoken grief and sorrow of human life. Some writers even portrayed these birds as iconic symbols of the enigmatic human psyche. For example, in Edgar Allan Poe's 'Raven' the bird becomes an iconic symbol of the enigmatic human psyche and Ted Hughes's "Crow" poems embody the unspoken grief and sorrow of human existence through violence and destruction. Therefore, this study attempts to uncover and highlight the mythological significance of the crow poems of Ted Hughes and Edgar Allan Poe through a deconstructive analysis. The research objective criteria of the study are as follows:

1. *Literary analysis focus*: examining the representation of crows and ravens in Ted Hughes's "Crow" poems and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" through detailed literary analysis;
2. *Mythological context*: identifying and analyzing mythological references and symbolism associated with crows and ravens in these literary works;
3. *Comparative approach*: comparing the thematic uses of crows and ravens in the selected poems, focusing on their symbolic roles in expressing human grief, sorrow, and the enigmatic psyche;
4. *Deconstructive methodology*: applying deconstructive analysis to reveal the underlying meanings and highlight the mythical relevance and symbolic depth of these birds in the selected poems;
5. *Cultural significance*: exploring how the mythological significance of crows and ravens in these works reflects broader cultural and historical contexts.

The findings of this study enhance the following areas of knowledge:

1. *Literary scholarship*: enhancing the understanding of the symbolic roles of crows and ravens in literature, contributing to literary scholarship on Ted Hughes and Edgar Allan Poe;
2. *Mythological studies*: providing insights into the cross-cultural mythological significance of crows and ravens, enriching studies of mythology and folklore;
3. *Psychoanalytic interpretation*: offering a psychoanalytic perspective on how these birds

symbolize human psychological states, aiding in the exploration of literary themes related to the human psyche;

4. *Educational resource*: serving as a resource for educators and students studying literary symbolism, mythological references, and deconstructive literary analysis;

5. *Interdisciplinary research*: encouraging interdisciplinary research that bridges literature, mythology, psychology, and cultural studies, fostering a holistic understanding of the symbolic significance of crows and ravens.

### 2.1. Mythological Significance of Crows and Ravens

Crows and ravens have been a part of folklore and mythology in almost every clime and culture for thousands of years (Riechelmann, 2013). Traditionally, these birds are associated with supernatural events such as death, afterlife, destiny, transformation, and knowledge of the future. Numerous studies on animal cognition have focused on the extraordinary intelligence of crows and ravens. One reason why crows are so remarkable is that research has indicated that they possess advanced abstract cognitive abilities, in addition to their exceptional problem-solving skills (Jürgens & Hackett, 2021). Almost all societies and cultures around the world acknowledge the rich symbolic meaning of ravens and crows because they are endowed with superior intelligence, wisdom, and adaptability. According to French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (2003), ravens became mythological because they ate the flesh of dead animals, which allowed them to arbitrate between life and death.

Crows and ravens are most often considered principal mythical figures in numerous subarctic and North-West Coast nations and in Eastern Siberia. The raven is often portrayed as a strong and cunning character similar to a trickster. He is the inventor of the word and its fallibilities, but he also breaks the laws of his own creation and pays the price for it as a "benevolent mischief-maker" and "affable scoundrel" (Jürgens & Hackett, 2021). Avarice, sloppiness, a propensity for lying, stealing, gluttony, and imprudence are some of his characteristics. Every culture has created its own myths about crows and ravens. For example, according to Burke (2013), numerous Native American communities are rich in stories about corvid features, which frequently address the subject of how corvids came to have black feathers. A common thread in these stories is that a corvid stole the sun from a powerful spirit, bringing light to previously dark worlds.

Greek mythology explains the blackening of corvids through the story of Apollo and Korone. When Apollo finds out from a raven that his lover Korone has cheated on him, Apollo kills Korone and turns the white raven black in despair. Similarly, ravens play a significant role in Norse and Germanic mythologies of Central European cultural traditions. Hugin and Munin, the two ravens whose names mean "thought" and "memory,"

respectively, represent portions of the god's soul and are seen accompanying Odin, the god of war (Meurer & Richarz, 2005). In Celtic mythology, the warrior goddess Morrighan is frequently depicted as a flock of ravens, crows, or an individual crow. These birds typically occur in flocks of three and are interpreted as an indication that Morrighan is about to make a visitation. The raven is a death omen in some Welsh mythological stories. To avoid being caught, witches and sorcerers were thought to possess the capacity to change into ravens and fly away. Similar to Coyote, the raven was viewed by Native Americans as a trickster and was connected to several events such as the creation of the world and the gifting of sunshine to humanity (Wigington, 2020).

In short, there have been numerous myths and folklore about crows and ravens in almost all cultures around the world for centuries, and these myths have become embedded in the unconscious psyche of humanity with certain integral associations. Although many poets have written about crows and ravens, this study will focus specifically on "Crow" poems written by Ted Hughes in modern times and "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe nearly two centuries ago because they have depicted these black birds as iconic symbols of human suffering or the unspoken grief and sorrow embedded in every human psyche.

### 3. Methodology

A deconstructive analysis of Hughes's and Poe's poems is undertaken to identify the binary opposites in these poems and demonstrate how their self-contradictory images destabilize any conclusive or definite patterns of meaning in the text. The theoretical framework of this study centers round the application of archetypal criticism to understand the significance of mythology in the human 'collective unconscious' and the impact created by "Crow" poems by Ted Hughes and Edgar Allan Poe. Finally, these poems will be subjected to deconstructive reading to reveal other possible dimensions as they are considered to be the most popular crow poems in the literary world.

Myth criticism, commonly known as archetypal criticism, originated from Abrams's (1959) emphasis on criticism as a scientific, objective, and methodical profession. In myth criticism, myths are an essential part of human thought and the result of societies' joint efforts to accord meaning to human existence. According to Abrams (1959), literature develops from fundamental archetypal patterns or basic transcendental genres. In other words, it is understood as a "system" built on "recurrent patterns" that emerges from the core of myth, which is similar to structuralism and the Jungian concept of the "collective unconscious."

Deconstruction, made popular by Derrida (2016), explores the text's meaning to the extent of revealing the alleged inconsistencies and internal conflicts that form its basis. It is intended to draw attention to the body of the text and to demonstrate the intricate and

shaky nature of its basic foundations (Bradley, 2008). In other words, deconstruction often shows that a given text includes several incompatible meanings, rather than presenting distinct totality. As a result, there are numerous ways to read a text. Although these interpretations are frequently and inseparably related, there can be intrinsic inconsistencies between them.

In Derrida's opinion, interpretive reading has many limitations. He maintains that a word's relationships to other words within the network of linguistic structures are what enable meaning. According to this perspective, the reader's interaction with a text determines its meaning, not the author or the author's intentions (Bradley, 2008). In this analysis, a strong emphasis is placed on deconstruction, i.e., the process of dissecting a text to identify arbitrary hierarchies and trace the contradictions that cast doubt on its coherence. Since Hughes's "Crow" poems and "The Raven" by Poe are open to several mythological allusions, a deconstructive analysis is the best method to reveal the multiple meanings and significance embodied in these poems.

#### 3.1. Deconstructive Analysis of Hughes's "Crow" Poems

In one of his interviews on "Crow" poems, Hughes asserted that he discarded eagles and opted to write about a crow or songs that the crow would sing. These songs, which lack any discernible melody and are characterized by simple, unpleasant language, serve to reveal the artist's intended message without consideration of any other factors (Fass, 1980). However, the poem must be examined in the context of several crow mythologies due to its intertextual elements, particularly its resemblance to Biblical stories, and legendary connotations regarding the crow. The elements of mythological and biblical references in the poems draw an analogy between antiquity and contemporaneity. In other words, the poet's endeavor can be regarded as an experimental attempt to comprehend the real nature of God or the Creator in relation to human existence (Baby, 2022). Therefore, on a deeper level, we understand that it is not possible to assign any specific meaning to the poems in this collection because they offer multiple reading possibilities. The numerous mythological allusions associated with the poem clearly contradict Hughes's claim that the poems are intended to be written as original and independent creations "in a super-simple, super-ugly language without any other consideration."

This study focuses specifically on a deconstructive reading of the first three crow poems by Hughes ("Two Legends," "Lineage," and "Examination at the Womb-Door"). Contradicting the author's claim of a fresh writing style that is independent of any influence or allusions, Sagar (1978) provides a graphic account of a crow's illustrious mythological ancestry. According to Sagar, the crow has a close relationship with the god of healing, who goes by different names such as Kronos, Saturn, Aesculapius, and Apollo. Similarly, another

crow god is referred to by the Celtic term Bran. When Bran realized that he was destined to die, he ordered his head cut off and buried as a charm on the "White Hill" to keep invaders away from England. Crow is also linked to alchemy, American, Chinese, and numerous other English mythologies.

There are many reasons why Hughes selected the crow as the main character. The bird's singularity makes it a useful tool for investigating the relevance of the God question, which is larger than most people can imagine. As the most intelligent bird and the most widely dispersed omnivorous species, the crow is endowed with qualities that enable it to effectively pierce the shadowy depths of empirical reality and reveal the essence of the creator of this material world. They are not only the biggest and least melodic of the songbirds but also completely black and virtually unbreakable. In other words, the crow is an embodiment of contradictions and paradoxes. This is evidenced by the harsh and grating sound of its song, which is indicative of its status as a carrion eater, a creature that is always present during disasters. In short, the crow has constructed a negative symbolic image in human consciousness through its actual life and mythological associations.

There is a messianic parallel in the story of the crow's life and deeds, starting with its ancestry, as Hughes recounts. Adam, Eve, and the serpent are clearly mentioned, strengthening the pseudo-biblical storyline even more evident despite the authorial claim. Therefore, Hughes's assertion that no planning was involved in the poems appears to be contradicted by the umpteen mythological allusions in the poems (Faas, 1980). The biblical creator, snake, or Adam and Eve share the stage with the protagonist in a number of apocryphal tales. The entire work's framework is derived from the Bible as well.

The origins of the crow are traced in the first section of the book. The extent of the book's adherence to the Bible is so great that Hahn (1977) claims that "Crow" provides a synoptic narrative of the ongoing historical action of the Old and New Testaments. Hughes's stories revolve around the creation of man and woman, the suffering of God's son, and the ultimate destruction of the world. He reinterprets the primary mythic patterns found in the Bible. Ironically, "Crow" originates from the biblical tale of creation, despite Hughes's desire to make it unique by stripping it of any conventional components. A principle that even the "logos" cannot fully comprehend is responsible for the creation of the crow, and not the pure divine "logos". God must subject the crow to several trials before allowing it to exist. A crow is unlike any other creature in the universe, as it is beyond the understanding of God. In the created reality, this, therefore, establishes it as a competitor or superior force. A creation without a creator is self-contradictory. If the all-powerful creator cannot understand a crow (a creation), the whole concept of creation becomes questionable. It destabilizes the very text or the fabric of the poems.

The book begins with the poem "Two Legends," which describes the genesis of the crow in precise terms. The crow is created out of empty darkness. It is a soaring negative from the void. This does not imply that the crow has no existence in this universe. According to Eskimo folklore, the world was once entirely black, just like the raven that was its sole creature. Although there are other legends describing this phenomenon, Sagar (1978) provides a graphic account of the reason for creating the crow:

"God, having created the world, has a recurring nightmare. The nightmare appears to be independent of the creation, and God cannot understand it. The nightmare is full of mockery of the creation, especially of man. God challenges the nightmare to do better. This is just what the nightmare was awaiting. It plunges into matter and creates the crow. God tests the crow by putting it through a series of trials and ordeals that sometimes result in the crow being dismembered, transformed, or obliterated, but the crow survives them all, little changed" (p. 106).

There is no denying the crow's likeness to the trickster character found in the Winnebago Indian cycle of tales. Every primitive society has a trickster figure like this one. Because it was both good and bad, a denier and an affirmer, a destroyer and a creator, no generation could fully comprehend it and live without it. It has no moral or social ideals and is driven only by its desires, but ironically, every value comes from it. Consequently, the crow's complete negation of life by clinging to darkness is the reason for its very existence. Even though light is a necessary prerequisite for the soul to manifest, Crow's intense aversion to light does not stop him from existing. Hughes's genesis story of the crow disproves all our ingrained notions:

"Black was the without eye  
Black the within tongue  
Black was the heart  
Black the liver, black the lungs  
Unable to suck in light" ("Crow," p. 13).

The second poem, "Lineage", has a mock-serious tone and is patterned on the biblical creation story. It describes the paradoxical nature of the cosmic force that created the crow, which ironically caused the destruction of the biblical account of creation (Baby, 2022). Since God appears to be a comparatively latecomer to the evolutionary scene, "Lineage" is essentially an existential reversal of the Genesis creation story, giving rise to a new tranche of existence that forces us to reconsider the existing creation account:

"In the beginning was Scream  
Who begat Adam  
Who begat Mary  
Who begat God  
Who begat Nothing  
Who begat Never  
Never Never Never  
Who begat Crow  
Screaming for Blood" ("Crow," p. 14).

"Examination at the Womb-Door", the third poem, is a recreation of Christian baptismal rituals. The poem comprises a sequence of inquiries intended to demonstrate death's superiority. During the baptism ceremony, the applicant professes his faith in Christ, who has overcome death through his resurrection, thereby rejecting death and its grip on life. Therefore, it is a ceremony in which the individual is assured of everlasting life by professing their faith in Christ, who overcame death. Death is more powerful than hope and love, as evidenced by the questions the crow asks and its responses. This is a categorical rejection of the Christian notion of salvation. Since hope and love form the cornerstones of the Christian faith, the concept of redemption becomes meaningless and ineffective when death has the final say. The crow, therefore, establishes the basis of its existence in death and darkness and rises above them:

"Who is stronger than hope? Death  
Who is stronger than the will? Death  
Stronger than love? Death  
Stronger than life? Death  
But who is stronger than death? Me, evidently  
Pass, Crow" ("Crow," p. 15).

The poem presents the most fundamental conflict between existence and non-existence. Even if it is only for a brief moment, life is a victory over death. Hirschberg (1981) notes that in this way, Crow's survival represents victory over death:

"In folklore, mythology, and legend, Crow is a scavenger who derives his strength and nourishment from assimilating what death cannot ingest and leaves behind. Thus, Crow is stronger than death because he feeds on death itself. The conclusion is both paradoxical and inescapable; for Crow, the only secure basis on which to build a life is not hope, will, or love but death" (p. 72).

In short, the construction of Crow's cosmos coincides with the dismantling of the core tenets of Christian doctrine. Therefore, the universe of the crow is patterned on the basic assumption of cosmic energy as a paradox of creation and destruction (Baby, 2022). A detailed deconstructive analysis of the first three poems in the sequence demonstrates that it is not possible to assign any specified meaning to the poems as they are built on mutually contradictory elements.

### 3.2. Deconstructive Analysis of Poe's "The Raven"

The first-person narrative of Poe's "The Raven" personifies the intense grief and loss of the poet on the death of his beloved Lenore. The symbols and images used in the poem reinforce a melodramatic mood of the poem. He hears someone knocking on the door just as he is about to fall asleep. But there is nobody there when he opens the door. The knocking sound comes from the window for the second time, and he finds a raven perching on the bust of the Greek goddess Pallas Athena when he opens the window shutters.

The speaker poses several questions to the raven and

receives the same answer "Nevermore" for all his queries. Finally, he turns to the raven and calls it an evil prophet and asks if the speaker will ever find relief from his sorrow and grief about the lost Lenore, or at least if he will be able to hold her when he reaches Heaven. The raven repeatedly utters the same refrain "Nevermore." At this point, the speaker becomes furious and tells the raven to leave him alone in his room. The bird simply cries out the refrain again and again without moving from the bust. According to the speaker's conclusion, the raven still perched there, casting an enduring shadow over his soul.

Since the publication of this poem, critics have attempted to elucidate its enigmas. Although Poe provided readers with an authorial interpretation and even offered a kind of self-criticism, it should be interpreted in the context of poststructuralist literary theory, which emphasizes a deconstructive reading of the text. To do so, the binary oppositions within the poem demonstrate the textual contradictions about the centrality of the text and its accepted meaning. Essentially, this poem is a collection of binary opposites or tensions, such as reality and fantasy, hope and despair, and life and death (Bakhsh, 2020). Effective deconstruction of the text involves highlighting the contradictions and inconsistencies that are woven throughout the poem. For instance, skepticism and reason are evident from the outset of the poem. It is unclear whether the narrator is awake or dreaming during the poem and whether what occurs is supernatural or subconscious because he nods out before the knock. Observe also how the narrator initially uses "nothing more" to justify the knock to convince himself that it has a reasonable source. However, his need to convince himself suggests uncertainty on his part.

In "The Raven," grief is the dominant emotion, and the narrator's grief for his departed love, Lenore, consumes him completely. The poem begins with the speaker attempting to divert his attention from his grief by studying an esoteric book. However, upon the appearance of the raven, he begins to inquire about Lenore, prompting the bird to respond with the phrase "nevermore." This response intensifies the speaker's sorrow. By the poem's conclusion, the narrator appears to have lost all hope and declares that his sorrow will never again "lift" his soul.

Poe purposely chose a raven because he thought it suited the dark tone of the poem because of the consuming power of grief. However, the speaker's idea of receiving comfort and happiness from an evil bird is absolutely paradoxical. In this process, he struggles with fantasy versus reality and wakefulness versus the dullness of a dream. The essence of the poem is interplay of binary opposites and contradictory images that evade definite patterns of meaning because the poem is built upon rationality versus irrationality.

In Derrida's view, a signifier (the form of a sign) does not refer to a definite signified (the content of a

sign); rather, it produces other possible signifiers. "The Raven" is a fine example of this constant shift in the signifier-signified relation that eludes definite patterns of meaning for the same object. For example, the narrator's sweet memory of his love (signifier) for Lenore (signified) in the past has now become unbearable grief, which later becomes sheer anger and madness after conversing with the raven. This constant shift in the signifier-signified relation violates the intended purpose of the narrator because he does not experience any positive emotions that the power of love can generate. On the contrary, the speaker becomes grief-stricken and mad.

The poem's continual transition between reason and irrationality makes it impossible for readers to draw any coherent conclusion. For instance, at the opening of the poem, the narrator is logical enough to realize that Lenore has passed away and he will never see her again. The speaker discovers that the raven's standard response to each question he poses is "nevermore," when the bird first begins repeating it. As the poem progresses, however, the narrator's irrationality intensifies, and he begins to inquire of the bird about matters that it is unable to address and assumes that the bird's repeated utterance of "nevermore" is a genuine and rational response. Subsequently, he gives in to his tremendous anguish and exhibits even more insanity, cursing the bird as a "thing of evil."

The deconstructive analysis of "The Raven" using the Derridean concept of a signifier-signified relation between binary opposites such as rationality versus irrationality, darkness versus light, happiness versus sorrow, fantasy versus reality, and emotion versus reason has demonstrated that fixed notions or definite patterns of meaning from the poem cannot be deduced. It is possible to present the principal binary oppositions within the poem and show that these opposite terms can easily run into each other, making it impossible to assign definite meaning to the poem.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The events in Hughes's sequence of poems about the crow proceed according to William Blake's theory that contradictions are a necessary part of existence. Hughes applied the scientific principle that "action has an equal and opposite reaction" to the core of Crow's existence. Crow's actions are consistent with this fundamental idea. Therefore, Crow can chuckle in the face of misery and pain. This fundamental law of nature guides all of his actions. As a result, the violence of creation balances the violence of death and destruction. Crow becomes an agent in the process of creation and destruction, true to its nature.

Crows' violent life thus becomes a biological need that operates as a paradox of creation and destruction. Hughes uses Crow to explore a different aspect of life that is outside human understanding. This can be observed in the character of Crow, who has become nebulous and contingent rather than an objectification of social, political, or moral entelechy. Lodge (1971)

compares Blake's "The Tyger" and Hughes's Crow, stating that both animals "symbolize some kind of non-ethical energy or principle in the universe which is not satisfactorily accounted for by the orthodox religion" (p. 41). Crow is so ill-defined that it defies our ability to understand. Crow's actions lack clarity, which is further compounded by their intertextual affinities.

It is possible to read the poems in the Crow series considering other earlier works. Kristeva (1986) defined intertextuality as "a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position, accompanied by the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another" (p. 15). Intertextuality is a crucial component of crow poetry and a useful instrument for textual analysis. In other words, Hughes masterfully uses text permutation, which is the intersection of many utterances from different texts, to produce new perceptions. When two texts are superimposed and matched, the original text is completely erased in the resulting scenario. This suggests that literary compositions have numerous allusions to other sources that are woven throughout the entirety of the freshly produced text.

"The Raven" by Poe perfectly illustrates the ongoing shift or change in the signifier-signified relationship proposed by Derrida. Due to the interplay between binary opposites, the poem eludes clear-cut patterns of meaning signified for the same object. For example, following a conversation with the raven, the narrator's previously positive recollection of his love (signifier) for Lenore (signified) transforms into an unbearable sadness. Eventually, it becomes pure rage and madness. Because the speaker does not feel the positive emotions that the power of love can bring, it is impossible to fully embrace the speaker's intended continual shift in the signifier-signified relationship. On the contrary, the poet becomes insane and depressed.

The poem's continuous transition between rationality and irrationality makes it impossible for readers to draw conclusive meanings. For instance, the narrator is logical enough to realize at the start of the poem that Lenore is dead and he will not see her again. It is understood by the speaker that the raven initially repeats "nevermore" as its normal response to every question he asks. However, the narrator's irrationality increases throughout the poem as he asks the bird questions it should not be answering and thinks that its recurring response of "nevermore" is a valid and logical response. Later, in a more irrational state of mind, he succumbs to his overwhelming anguish and denounces the bird as an "evil entity." In short, the findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. *Theory of contradictions:* Hughes's "Crow" poems embody William Blake's theory that contradictions are an essential part of existence. This principle manifests in Crow's actions, which reflect the scientific idea that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Crow's behavior, characterized by a balance between creation and destruction, exemplifies this fundamental law of nature.

2. *Chuckle in the face of misery*: Crow's ability to laugh at misery and pain signifies a deep understanding and acceptance of the duality of life, where violence and destruction are balanced by creation and rebirth.

3. *Biological need for violence*: Crow's life, filled with violence, becomes a paradoxical necessity integral to the cycle of creation and destruction. This paradox highlights an aspect of life that transcends human understanding, positioning Crow as a nebulous and contingent entity rather than a clear moral or social symbol.

4. *Comparison to Blake's "The Tyger"*: David Lodge's comparison of Blake's "The Tyger" and Hughes's "Crow" highlights the notion of non-ethical energy or principles in the universe that defy orthodox religious explanations. Both creatures embody primal, ambiguous forces that resist clear moral categorization.

5. *Intertextuality in "Crow" poems*: Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality is pivotal to understanding Hughes's "Crow" poems. Hughes's text permutation technique, in which different texts intersect to create new meanings, allows for a rich tapestry of literary allusions.

6. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" exemplifies Derrida's conceptualization of the fluid relationship between the signifier and the signified. The poem's meaning shifts as the narrator's emotions transform throughout the interaction with the raven.

7. *Transformation of love to madness*: The narrator's initial sweet memories of Lenore turn into unbearable sorrow and eventually rage, illustrating a continual shift in meaning. The interplay of binary opposites, such as love and grief, rationality and madness, prevents any stable interpretation of the poem.

8. *Rationality vs. irrationality*: The poem oscillates between rational and irrational states, complicating the reader's ability to draw definitive conclusions. Initially, the narrator understands Lenore's death and rationalizes the raven's responses. However, as the poem progresses, he irrationally projects deeper meanings onto the bird's repeated utterance, "nevermore." The narrator's increasing irrationality culminates in his desperate and illogical questions to the raven and his ultimate despair, highlighting the tension between logical understanding and emotional turmoil.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the poems "Crow" by Hughes and "The Raven" by Poe do not yield a coherent set of meanings. However, both poems depict the bird as an indelible reality in the human psyche, representing the suffering and unspoken grief of human existence. Placing the crow in competition with God as the creator, Hughes accomplishes this. Strangely enough, the principle of death is embodied in the works of the crow. Hence, the crow feels the pangs of death at its birth and interprets its birth as the physical manifestation of an unbreakable cosmic energy that represents a non-ethical energy or principle in the

cosmos. Consequently, our limited comprehension is unable to fully grasp the ethereal essence of Hughes's crow. Because of these intertextual affinities, Crow's actions are even more illogical. Crow is unique among creatures in the universe, existing beyond the comprehension of God. In the created reality, this consequently establishes him as a competitor or a superior power. A creation without a creator is self-contradictory in itself. If the all-powerful creator cannot understand a crow (a creation), the whole concept of creation becomes questionable. It destabilizes the very text or the fabric of the poems.

Similarly, fixed notions or definite patterns of meaning in the poem cannot be determined, as shown in the previous section by the deconstructive analysis of "The Raven" that employed the Derridean concept of a signifier-signified relation between binary opposites such as rationality versus irrationality, darkness versus light, happiness versus sorrow, fantasy versus reality, and emotion versus reason. Consequently, the most constructive approach to understanding the poem is to identify its principal binary oppositions and illustrate how these contrasting concepts interact with one another. This analysis should be conducted in such a way that any definitive interpretation of the poem is rendered impossible.

In short, Hughes's "Crow" poems and Poe's "The Raven" both explore the complex and contradictory nature of existence through their avian protagonists. Hughes uses Crow to elucidate the duality of creation and destruction, employing intertextuality to deepen the thematic richness. In contrast, Poe's "The Raven" serves as a vehicle to examine the instability of meaning and the interplay between rationality and irrationality. Through their symbolic use of crows and ravens, both works offer profound insights into the human condition, emphasizing the inherent contradictions and shifting meanings that define human experience.

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